

American history. Dr. Woodson chose the second week of February because two people he felt had dramatically affected the lives of Black Americans were born during that month: Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. In addition, the month of February is significant for the birthdays of W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, Eubie Blake and the founding of the NAACP.

I am pleased to join in this celebration and I hope that every person will take a moment to reflect on the life and legacies of individuals like Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks and Thurgood Marshall. Their fight, and the work of so many others, helped bring social justice to communities throughout the country. As we celebrate this year's theme, "The Souls of Black Folk: Centennial Reflections," we also honor the achievements and legacy of African-Americans and are reminded that we must continue to remember the contributions and sacrifices throughout history.

I encourage all Americans to gain awareness of and appreciation for African-American history.

NATIONAL EYE DONOR MONTH

HON. JAY INSLEE

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2003

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring to the attention of my colleagues and the citizens of this great nation that March is National Eye Donor Month.

I rise also because cornea transplantation is an issue with which I have had some personal experience. One of my sons is one of the 46,000 patients who receive cornea transplants each year. Through the altruistic act of donation, my son's quality of life was substantially improved. These transplant surgeries can relieve patients of glared or blurred vision, painful swelling, and can effectively avoid corneal blindness, something that afflicts over forty thousand Americans every year.

As you may know Mr. Speaker, the first corneal transplant was performed in 1905, and the first eye bank opened in New York in 1944. Since then, eye banks have flourished nationwide and over half a million patients have received the gift of sight. These nonprofit organizations have also been instrumental in the advancement of medical science. Their facilitation and safeguarding of these precious gifts have allowed researchers to promulgate transplant procedures that have resulted in extraordinarily high success rates.

The achievements of eye banks are self-evident. Currently, eye banks meet our nation's need for corneal and sclera tissue. In 2002, 50,857 corneal grafts, given by over 46,000 donors, were supplied by U.S. eye banks. Today, every American who needs a corneal transplant can expect to receive one due to the generous donation of another. It is also important to note that the number of eye and tissue donors is enormous when compared to donors of solid organs. Approximately 10 individuals donate eyes and tissue for every person that donates organs.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, it has been brought to my attention that over one million Americans age 40 and over are currently blind, and that an additional 2.4 million are visually impaired.

It is speculated that over the next 30 years, with the retirement of the Baby Boom Generation, this problem will double. I would therefore ask and encourage my colleagues, as well as all Americans, to sign a donor card and to speak with their loved ones about their donation wishes. Under the auspices of the Eye Bank Association of America, the restoration of sight is a miracle that has become reality in our lifetime. I urge this Congress to celebrate their accomplishments, and to become more involved in matters relating to transplantation.

RECOGNITION OF AMANDA TOOMEY

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2003

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Amanda Toomey, a very special young woman who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Girl Scouts of America, Troop 3083, and in earning the most prestigious honor of The Gold Award.

The Girl Scout Gold Award is the highest achievement attainable in girl scouting. To earn The Gold Award, a scout must complete five requirements, all of which promote community service, personal and spiritual growth, positive values, and leadership skills. The requirements include, (1). earning four interest project patches, each of which requires seven activities that center on skill building, technology, service projects, and career exploration, (2). earning the career exploration pin, which involves researching careers, writing resumes, and planning a career fair or trip, (3). earning the senior girl scout leadership award, which requires a minimum of 30 hours of work using leadership skills, (4). designing a self-development plan that requires assessment of ability to interact with others and prioritize values, participation for a minimum of 15 hours in a community service project, and development of a plan to promote girl scouting, and (5). spending a minimum of 50 hours planning and implementing a Girl Scout Gold Award project that has a positive lasting impact on the community.

For her Gold Award project, Amanda led a Daisy Troop.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Amanda Toomey for her accomplishments with the Girl Scouts of America and for her efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of The Gold Award.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR DAVID JORDAN

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2003

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, in commemoration of Black History Month, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the many accomplishments of distinguished African-Americans in Mississippi's Second Congressional District.

Today, I rise to pay tribute to Senator David Jordan. Senator Jordan earned a BS degree

from Mississippi Valley State University. He went on to earn a MS degree in Chemistry from the University of Wyoming. Senator Jordan then went on to become a teacher.

Senator Jordan has also been very active in fighting for civil rights and politics. He has participated in many boycotts, marches, and class-action suits. Senator Jordan require more time and services in teaching people how to use voting machines. Senator Jordan also fought on behalf of the Second Congressional District during recent redistricting.

Senator Jordan has also served as President of the Greenwood Voter's League and President of the Greenwood City council. He was first elected to the state Senate in 1983. Senator Jordan has had a great deal of success during his time in office.

IMPROVE VETERANS' ACCESS TO PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

HON. GERALD D. KLECZKA

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2003

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, today I am again introducing legislation, the Veterans Medication Accessibility Act, which would permit veterans to obtain prescription medications from Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals using prescriptions written by their family doctor. This legislation is identical to H.R. 1717, a bill I introduced in the last Congress.

Our nation's veterans are eligible to receive health care at VA facilities for illnesses and injuries that are not only service-related but also those incurred after their service. Because the VA acknowledges that some veterans have more severe ailments, a veteran is placed in one of seven priority categories when seeking care. Those with serious service-connected disabilities are placed in a high priority category while those in generally good health and with income exceeding a certain amount are placed in a lower priority group for scheduling of care.

Currently, those veterans that do not have service-connected injuries and whose income is above the level that makes them eligible for free care may fill their prescriptions at VA facilities for the low cost of \$7 per prescription per 30-day supply. However, in order to obtain these medicates from the VA, these veterans must first receive an outpatient visit with a VA physician.

While I have heard from many veterans who are eager to take advantage of reduced-cost medications, many are not disabled, poor, and do not suffer from a service-connected ailment, which means they must often wait from several months to over a year for their requisite outpatient visit. This places an unnecessary financial burden on our veterans who must pay retail prices to fill their prescriptions while they wait to see a VA primary care physician. This policy can also impose a health burden, as this long wait may discourage veterans from seeking VA medication treatment altogether.

My legislation would allow veterans immediate access to needed medications by allowing them to fill prescriptions written by their family doctor at the VA.

This change would provide our veterans with timely access to low-cost prescription